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"IMMORTALITY,"

A SERMON

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH

OF

BARNABAS BIDWELL, ESQ.

By J. Smith, A. M. Kingston.



KINGSTON, U. C.

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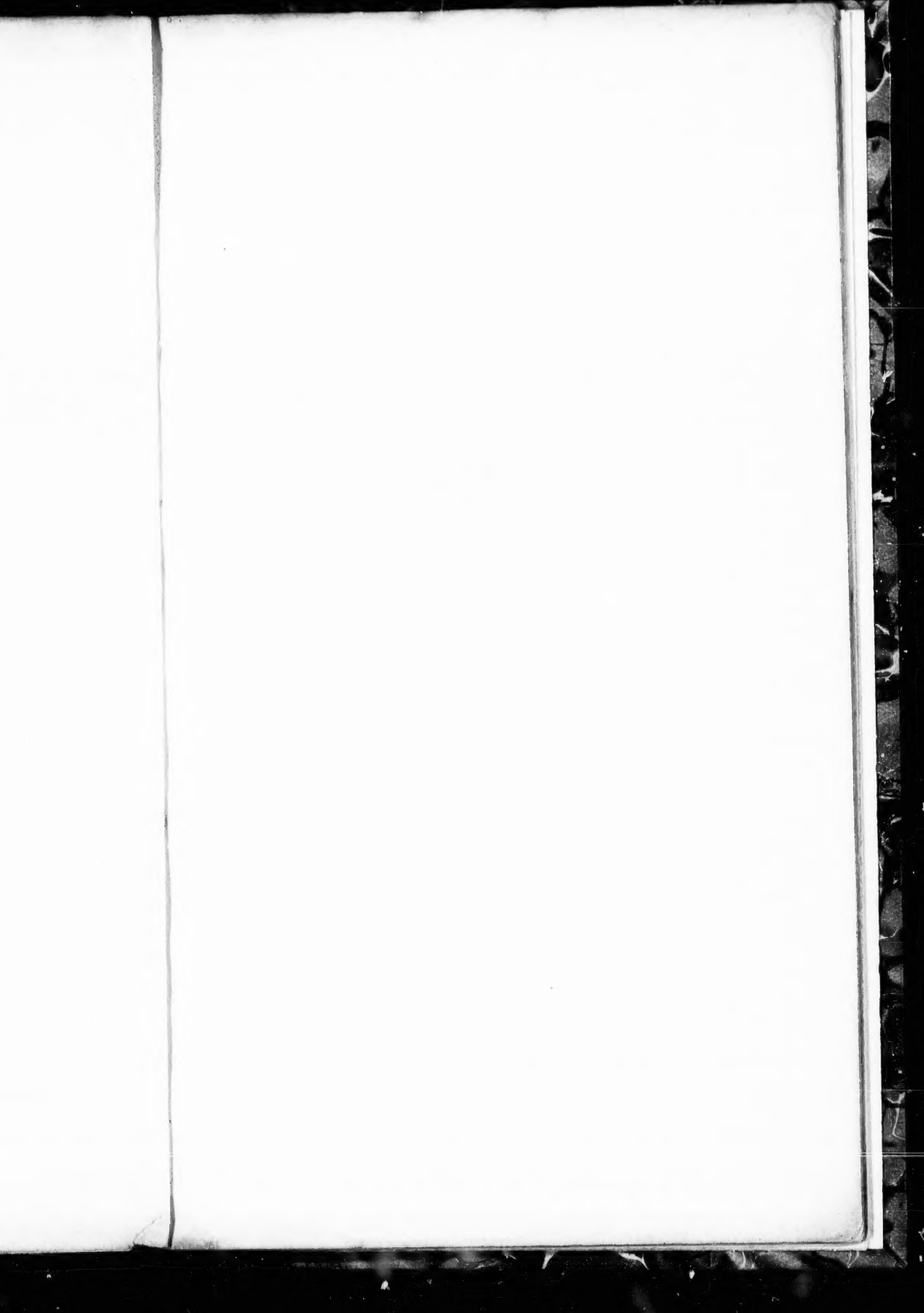
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A SERMON.

1 Cor. XV. 53--"This mortal must put on immortality."

REFLECTION ON the animal powers of man, and on the termination of that state called DEATH, simply as matter of fact is assumed.

CORRECTION.—The two first lines of the Sermon should read thus:—"Reflection on the decay of the animal powers of man, and on the termination of that decay in the state called Death," &c.

extent, and the cause of those agonizing struggles with which life generally departs. We could not but suspect that they did not all arise from the mere love of the present state, which to many is sufficiently miserable to make any change seem advantageous. Nor could the instinctive dread which we entertain of sinking into nothing, explain it. The doctrine of annihilation is too contradictory—too ill supported to be stoutly maintained, except by those whose interests would make them wish not to be. And even then, they can not believe what they wish: mark them on the bed of sickness, with the symptoms, the visage of death staring them in the face! The troubled countenance and unsettled eye—the sudden shiver—the half checked, half uttered groan—the fretful temper, and the broken voice, faltering ere yet death's watchman springs his rattle in their throats—these, all these, testify their unwilling belief in a future state, and their mental strife on entering its gloomy porch: and when life had departed, we could not but inquire what it was, and whither it had gone? On beholding the inanimate mass hastening to stench and rottenness, we could not but wonder what had become of the sentient active principle that so lately

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A SERMON.

1 Cor. XV. 53--"This mortal must put on immortality."

REFLECTION on the animal powers of man, and on the termination of that state called DEATH, simply as matter of fact, is accompanied with considerations sufficient to excite our most eager curiosity, yet at the same time to deprive that curiosity of its characteristic vanity, and to give to it a seriousness, a tenderness, and circumspection, becoming the difficulty, the interest and importance of the subject. If death happened only to a few individuals, at long and stated intervals—or only in a particular country, to a single class of beings—it would not even thus be to them altogether a matter of concern. It would awaken intense anxiety, deep and painful sympathy, in the bosom of all their fellow creatures. We should be curious to know what could be the nature, the extent, and the cause of those struggles with which life generally departs. We could not but regret that they did not all arise from the mere love of the present state, which to many is sufficiently miserable to make any change seem advantageous. Nor could the instinctive dread which we entertain of sinking into nothing, explain it. The doctrine of annihilation is too contradictory—too ill supported to be stoutly maintained, except by those whose interests would make them wish not to be. And even then, they can not believe what they wish: mark them on the bed of sickness, with the symptoms, the visage of death staring them in the face! The troubled countenance and unsettled eye—the sudden shiver—the half checked, half uttered groan—the fretful temper, and the broken voice, faltering ere yet death's watchman springs his rattle in their throats—these, all these, testify their unwilling belief in a future state, and their mental strife on entering its gloomy porch: and when life had departed, we could not but inquire what it was, and whither it had gone? On beholding the inanimate mass hastening to stench and rottenness, we could not but wonder what had become of the sentient active principle that so lately

spoke and shone through this now fixed and lightless countenance, that felt and acted through these senseless immoveable organs—whose vacant harmony and lingering consistence render the circumstance of so severe a dispensation only more distinctly visible, yet more terribly mysterious. Hath that living principle too suffered? Hath it submitted to similar ruin—ceased to act, to exist? or hath it merely changed its tenement; and taking up a new residence, is it now exempt from toil and woe; from any further or repeated dissolution? Or doth it continue in a cold and cheerless separation—hovering over the remains of its former companion, waiting and longing for a happy reunion?

But the ravages of death are not thus restrained. His dominion is unbounded. He rules in every clime—in every generation. Decay is the portion of all that is material—the lot of its inheritance. The animate and inanimate creation alike receive its impress. The tender plant—the creeping vine, falls before it. So doth the stately oak—the cedar of Lebanon—the meanest insect that creeps along, and the strong lion, king of beasts, fall together beneath its indiscriminate stroke. The fleet deer cannot escape it; the lofty eagle cannot soar beyond its reach. It comes too in due season to the human race—mortality is written on the brow of every child of man; its terrors are graven on his heart, and sooner or later, by disease or accident, in the feebleness of infancy or decrepitude of age, or perchance in the full vigor of manhood, Death, which levels all distinctions, will smite us, even us, and mingle the ashes of our now erect and healthful frames with the clods of the soil—with the dust of the beasts which perish!

But this is not all. The mere physical circumstances of death, even when combined with its commonness, are not half so affecting as its uncertainty. There is nothing sure about it, but that it will come: the when and the how—its time and manner are all unknown, and so in general are the consequences of death. The dead, proverbially, tell no tales; they will not return at our call. And would one rise from the dead to disclose to us the secrets of his dark and silent prison-house, it is improbable that we should believe him. It is then this secrecy and uncertainty which oppress us. They give to death the character of a gloomy and malicious tyrant, who refines upon cruelty, and rejoices more in the suspense than in the destruction of his victims. His very whisper grates harsh thunder in our ears and shakes the firmest nerves at the dread of his approach. Oh! how aptly is he called the King of Terrors! Wrapped in a mantle of obscurity, nothing is visible of him

but the sheen of his fatal spear—the lightning of his quivering dart which he brandishes insultingly over us. He makes us die a thousand deaths; he threatens oft before he strikes; he robs and tortures ere he kills. Whilst yet he seems to hesitate whether he shall smite us fatally and at once, and so end together all our apprehensions and distress—his stroke descends and rifles us of relatives whose lives are bound up in ours—of friends whose existence is dearer to us than our own. Oh! how oft since his first victim sunk before him hath he entered the happy unsuspecting circle, and by one fell stroke hath dashed all their joys. Oh! how many, and especially of late, hath this inexorable foe left with stript hearts and scathed feelings, to bewail the sad havoc of his frequent strokes! How many have to exclaim in the impassioned language of the sublime poet—

“Insatiate Archer! Could not one suffice?”

Thy shafts flew thrice! and thrice my peace was slain!”

Or in the pathetic strains of the yet sublimer Psalmist, “*Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.*”

This widowhood of the affections—this desolation of the heart—this wilderness of grief which the death of those we love creates, is rendered still more distressing by the fearful doubts which overhang their invisible state, and the equally impenetrable incertitude of our own. Do they yet live? Shall we live with them? Shall we together be all happy or miserable hereafter? Or shall we be solitary in our woe—divided in our bliss? Alas! it is the torrent of thoughts like these rushing on the already agitated soul which breaks it loose from its foundations, and makes it long for the firm rest of certainty—which causes it to prefer to its present doubt and fear, the awful risk of discovering whatever death may unfold—of enduring whatever the pregnant womb of eternity may bring forth. “*I loathe it,*” said one; “*I would not live away.*” “*It is better for me to die than to live.*” “*O that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! Then should I yet have comfort? Yea I would harden myself in sorrow.*”

These, these are the moments and the moods of soul in which consolation is required, a consolation far stronger and richer than any thing of earthly origin, than any temporal or worldly source can afford. And this consolation is alike necessary to him who departs and

to those who survive : for who could think of departing from this earth, and without a single pang or emotion of regret, leaving behind him all that renders life here attractive—of lying down in the cold and wintry grave—of going away into a land of darkness and forgetfulness and perpetual desolation ? He could not, brethren, he could not, unless his faculties were all ruined—the tender sensibilities of his nature utterly destroyed, and himself debased beneath the brute;—or else by some bright hope, some strong consolation, he were raised above the fear of death, and animated by anticipated joys ! And what, Oh ! what, could sooth the parting spirit equally with the assurance that it shall not die—that it shall return to God who gave it ? What can cheer the sorrowing friends weeping over the senseless corpse, so much as the confidence that his better part, the soul, doth still survive—that this dead clay over which they lament, shall again live—that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and they all meet to dwell together in a blissful immortality ?

The doctrine of a future life finds then a congenial soil in the human breast. It strikes its roots deep into the chasms which grief makes in the heart. It is watered by the tears of affliction, and cherished by the warm rays of hope and desire. It is the universality of our need for such a consolation which may, in part at least, account for the universal belief of mankind in a future state. The persuasion of its existence prevails in every clime, and among all the tribes of our afflicted race. No nation is so rude as not to entertain—none so refined as to reject the hope of eternal life. It cheers the solitary hunter when disappointed of his prey, and checks the murmurs of the overreached citizen. It illumines the dark superstitions of the savage, and gilds the profoundest contemplations of the sage. It gleams through the fictions of poetic genius—it dispels the cold misty doubts of philosophic speculation, and sheds lustre on the facts and narratives of historic lore. But though thus universal, it seems in the earlier days of the world before the appearance of Christ to have been like the radiations of a partial and inconstant flame or the glimmering twilight compared with the unclouded and increasing glory of that sun whose rise brought life and incorruption to light.

Observe, a distinction is carefully to be made between the expectation of a future state and the doctrine of the resurrection. The immortality of the soul combined with or deduced from its spiritual nature has ever been maintained. A belief, then, in a future existence, separate from

the body, or with the soul inhabiting some essential form thrown off at death from the gross material as the visible organ of the ethereal spirit, seems to have been general among the nations. This belief however, assumed different aspects according to the varied state of information in different parts and ages of the world; or to the diversity of capacities and opportunities of the individuals by whom it was entertained; but in few or none did it rise above the superstitious fears, or dispel the clouds of ignorance which sin and alienation from God ever produce. It seldom affected the moral conduct or moulded the mental character; and instead of ministering consolation to men in the prospect of death, it seems rather to have been the cause of additional regret that they should be summoned from the realities of this life to the meagre and unsubstantial portion of disembodied ghosts. The belief was neither very vivid nor very constant, and could not therefore be efficient. The reason was that it rested not on adequate evidence. There was no forcible appeal to the senses by which alone the multitude are led. It was the work rather of imagination than of reason. It sprang from desire or corrupted tradition, not from full and abiding proof—But of a distinct and limited state in which the conscious spirit should exist apart from the body for a season, to be terminated by the resurrection of the corporeal frame and a reunion of soul and body, little was known or thought. If it had ever been promulgated, the idea of it was lost in some symbolic tradition which the later generations did not comprehend. This was reserved for divine revelation to disclose—for a Saviour to confirm.

There are many testimonies to the resurrection scattered through the writings of the old testament; and it was no doubt generally admitted by the Jews. Yet the term often means from their mouths little or nothing more than a future life, and at the coming of Christ, even that was by many scoffed at and disowned. The sects which denied the resurrection, and in their corrupt imaginations annihilated both angels and spirits, already prevailed. The Sadducees and Herodians were paramount in religion and in the state, and they employed the power which their places gave them, to rid themselves of one whom they feared as a rival in popularity, an opponent in doctrine, one chief ground of their hatred and opposition to whom, was the plain and forcible manner in which he proclaimed the resurrection and the coming judgment. In this they were joined by the Pharisees who professed to expect both. They succeeded in putting to death the

Prince of life, though not in disproving his doctrine or quelling their own animosities and fears; and their combination only shows how inefficient was the professed faith of the one sect, and how virulent the hatred of all to Him, who by his own resurrection converted the machinations of his enemies into the means of their discomfiture.

This need not surprise us. With all our advantages, the fullest information, indubitable evidence, improved means of testing it, and the absence of any ground of opposition, our conceptions of the future life are not more clear, our convictions of its truth not more firm or influential. How very few form any thing more than a vague apprehension of continued existence after death, a prolongation of consciousness and enjoyment. The vast majority dare not look immortality in the face. They will not venture to enquire into their own notions of it, or to ask what are the declarations of sound reason and of pure revelation in its behalf. They are cowards before the very object which they profess to desire, and fear to hold more intimate fellowship with it, lest its character or their title to possess it may change as it draws more near. It cannot however be possessed without submitting to the embraces of death, and his aspect is too fearful to allow them to think of obtaining it at such a price. What then is the future state? What is immortality? and what is its league with death and corruption? Death is merely the dissolution of the soul and the body, a divorce between the natural form and invisible spirit, and surely our ideas of these are so full of a contrariety between them, that such a separation might seem far less improbable than their union. When death has taken place, when the spirit departs, the body becomes insensible and inert, puts on its mortality, incapable of action, motion or feeling. It might have continued thus lifeless, but incorruptible; its organization perfect, its hues unfading; but it becomes livid putrid, and dissolves. Its parts unloosed mingle with their kindred dust. It says "to corruption thou art my father; to the worm thou art my mother and my sister." Corruption then is the consequent of mortality, which is itself the offspring of death—that severs body and soul, matter and spirit. But may not the spirit too suffer similar change? No. It hath not flesh and bones, is not material, therefore cannot be dissolved. It is incorruptible, neither can it die. It is simple in its essence; it hath no further connexion to break up, no other mate from which to part. Whatever may be the power of its author to destroy it, the soul is already immortal. It will for ever live, and think, and feel, the conscious seat

of thought, sensibility, and emotion, unless its maker see fit to turn it to destruction. The body is thus the only subject of operation in the resurrection; and if by that event it is rendered immortal, its incorruption will also be secured. It might have continued, it might, for aught that we could have told, be raised incorruptible, yet not have been immortal; it might become both, and yet not be reunited to its original companion. Why should those so long and so widely separated, and amid such a multiplicity of events as will crowd the morning of the resurrection, be again brought together? Why recognize each other and be again so intimately combined? Oh! to how many will such a reunion be less than desirable! And why could they not avoid it? The same message which reveals the rising of the dead, proclaims this reunion, and if that message is true, in vain shall any attempt to deny or evade it.

These distinctions, sufficiently important in themselves, and necessary to the accurate and full conception of this doctrine, are not generally made—are too seldom stated by those who advocate the general views here maintained. Hence great force of argument is often lost, much ingenuity wasted, and the requisite impressions on the heart are not made. But they are carefully maintained in the sacred scriptures; and if they are just, and were powerfully enforced, how must they affect the sophisms of the modern Saducee, the indifference of the careless and unthinking! How do they destroy the hopeless scheme of the Atheist, and disturb the sleep, the lullaby of soul of the Socinian and Universalist! How should they arrest the attention and rouse the energies of those who are living on from day to day, secretly consoling themselves with some vague hope of immortality, while they deny or disregard the means by which alone it can be rendered happy, the doctrine and precepts, the atonement and example of Jesus, who only is the resurrection and the life! And Oh! how should they animate the true christian, when under the influence of a lively and sanctified imagination, he anticipates not only his own exceeding and eternal weight of glory, but the full recognition and perpetual fellowship of those whom on earth he loved, or at least of all who were truly worthy of his love!

Proofs of the declaration that the dead shall be raised are manifold, and may be drawn from various topics both in the physical and in the moral world. The vegetable creation annually undergoes an alternate death and resurrection. Many of the animals undergo a

similar change from activity to torpor, from insensibility to fresh vigor and enjoyment. Some, especially among apparently the lowest class, re-appear in a different and highly improved form, passing from the crawling noxious caterpillar, to the beautiful and soaring butterfly. Is it objected that this change is, in such instances, natural and regular, passing at short intervals, equal in all instances, and followed by a final death, while in man it is to be an immense transition, in some after a long lapse of ages, in others sudden as in a moment, but permanent in all? This objection has more plausibility than weight, and proceeds rather from confidence in ignorance than from any enlarged view. But what can be denied to the power of God? What can not he perform, who creates and sustains all, and hath given us these proofs from analogy, to confirm the argument from his moral government? Can it be doubted that he is the judge of all the earth, or that he will do right? Is it not proper that the body, which is the instrument, often the cause, of moral action, should share with the soul in punishment or reward? Do we perceive that participation now, or the semblance of retributive justice on this earth maintained? If not, then we must look for a day in which God will judge the living and the dead, and give to every man in his own body, according to the deeds which he hath done in it, whether they have been good or whether they have been bad. But after all, it is from Christ Jesus, our risen Lord, that the firm and influential proof is derived. Ah! it is he who is the resurrection and the life! It was his teaching which gave to the doctrine its distinctness and consistency. His own rising gave to his declaration of it full proof and energy: and who could any longer doubt its truth that beheld him glorified, and felt him to be "declared the son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead?" It is by this wonderful event that his followers were begotten again unto a lively hope. You cannot but have noticed with what confidence and energy the doctrine is afterwards declared by them, giving proof of their own sincerity, and producing in others a full conviction in the belief of the declaration, that this mortal shall put on immortality.

But in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and in the statements of his disciples, we have not only convincing proof of this promised change, we have also illustrations of what its nature will be. In this state the human frame is one of imperfection. It is feeble, affected by fatigue and want, liable to the infirmities of age, to disease and to death. It is a natural body, sown in weakness and dishonor; but it will be



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raised a powerful and spiritual body, possessed of unfading youth and vigor—mighty to suffer or enjoy—never to be satiated with delight or exhausted by pain and woe. Of the composition and appearance and mode of operation of such a spiritual frame we cannot speak exactly, because we can form no adequate idea of it; but we are told distinctly, that it cannot consist in flesh and blood, that it will not be clogged by these gross materials. They will be dropped like an old and wretched habiliment, when the spirit shall be clothed upon with its house which is from heaven. Then shall this corruptible put on incorruption, that mortality may be swallowed up of life. Even death itself shall die, and be cast with hell, the invisible state of separate spirits, into the lake of fire; this is the second death. Blest indeed are they over whom this second death shall have no power; for, my dear hearers, while the doctrine of this text is a general one, and while their will be a resurrection equally of the godly and the wicked, Oh! how widely different will be their lot in that common event! The dead in Christ will rise first; even in the order of its occurrence they will have the pre-eminence. But what is that compared with the reception they will meet, the glory by which they will be enveloped? Citizens of heaven, their vile bodies will be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus the Son of God. His own mighty power and ineffable skill will be occupied in their construction. No more the slaves of sense and sin—no more confined to earth, they shall wing their joyous flight to meet their coming Saviour, together with their renovated brethren who have never died, and so shall be for ever with the Lord. In his blessed presence they shall serve him day and night without weariness, and enjoy the unutterable bliss of his favor and society without satiety from its fullness, or anxiety from the dread of its cessation.

But how different, Oh! how widely opposite, will be the condition of the faithless and ungodly? He shall be raised to everlasting shame and contempt. Already I hear his voice. No sooner doth his blaspheming tongue find release from the iron hand of death, which alone could restrain it, than he sets his mouth against the heavens: and the oath, the curse which fell faintly from his dying lips, breaks unwittingly forth with all the tremendous energy of his immortal frame. Then doth it enter into the ears of the Lord of hosts, and whilst yet its accents are ringing in his own, he beholds amid ten thousand times ten thousand witnesses, the countenance of his Judge. Oh! how does he seek again to nestle and hide in the grave which he hath

just left! But it is already shut, and refuses to receive its wonted inmate. Then doth he turn to the mountains and to the rocks to fall on him, and cover him from the wrath of the Lamb; but they have already fled at their Creator's rebuke—Irrisistibly dragged before the divine throne, compelled to bear the searching glance of that eye which turneth every way to guard the saint, but to detect the unbeliever—guilty and despicable in his own eyes, replenished with shame and contempt, before a congregated universe, Oh! how doth he dread the perpetuity of those feelings which he cannot escape or repress? And when driven from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, to dwell with the devil and his angels, Oh! how doth he curse them, his sovereign judge, his guilty companions, his own self, and that existence which he now feels shall never have an end? Suicide will not then avail: no weapon hath been formed to destroy his endless life; his mortal hath put on immortality, and instead of finding it his consolation, he feels it his bitterest grief. Millions of ages would not be hopeless; but eternity! an eternity of unutterable woe! He tries to turn from it, but expresses his despair in weeping, inarticulate wails, and gnashing of teeth.

My dear hearers, is there no moral, no instruction, no incitement, from such a description? Will not the christian strive more fully to comprehend and appreciate such a scene? And as he realizes his own interest in it, will he not feel a serious and solemn joy take possession of his mind? Will he not say in his afflictions, they are not worthy for a moment to be compared with this exceeding eternal weight of glory which shall be revealed in him? Will not gratitude to the Saviour who hath unfolded these glorious realities—who hath bought him to the possession by his own precious blood—will not gratitude, I say, and esteem, and a sense of duty to such a Saviour, grow more powerful in his heart, and prompt him to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; to become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? Yes! let us who hope in the Lord, seek to be partakers of his holiness.

Again, should not such an expectation as this subdue the pride of the sinner, and shake his unbelief? Oh! why should he continue to hope for immortality, and yet treasure up to himself only wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? Rather let him extinguish the lamp of reason, the light of revelation from his soul, and in the darkness and madness of Atheism, without God and without hope, pass his narrow span of life, in seeking the

goods which perish! The future hath for him no tidings of peace and prosperity. He hath in his mockery of the Almighty, created to himself a void, a blank where no good is: let him eat and drink then, for to-morrow he may die! Yea, this night his soul may be required of him. But he cannot obliterate the impress of eternity; he cannot with all his ravings banish the conviction of immortality. It is stamped on his understanding and his heart; it is entwined with his thoughts and his feelings, and he cannot destroy it except he unthread the web of his existence. Oh! let the sinner then, the unbeliever, rather listen still to the invitations of mercy! Let him heed her warning voice. The Saviour is yet ready to hear, is still mighty and willing to save. Believe in him therefore, and be saved; trust in him whose atonement is perfect, and whose death hath secured immortal happiness for all who believe. Then shall you triumph at the approach of death, and leave behind you to your weeping friends, a rich consolation, while you say, "O death where is thy sting! O grave where is thy victory! Thanks be unto God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly."

These were the last sentiments and expressions of him whose removal to another state, however great a loss to us, I can scarcely say we regret. It is his gain; and if so, far from us be the selfish or rebellious disposition to murmur and repine, when our Sovereign and gracious Lord calls home any of our friends. Let us rather improve the dispensation, to prepare ourselves for a similar call. "Be ye also ready," is the language of every such event. While yet their place in our memories is green, and our imaginations are invigorated by our sense of loss, their loved forms seem still to glide before us, the echo of their last accents to dwell upon our ear, to lead and invite us to share in their repose. And when our dull senses can no longer be deceived, when our bereavement and their absence are fully realized, faith can still fancy them, though invisible, encompassing our path, or bending from their exalted enjoyment to watch our progress and encourage our efforts in the course which leads to glory and everlasting bliss. Had I been disposed to doubt the immortality of the soul, or been desirous of obtaining additional evidence of its existing in a separate state, I know not where to have found better proof of such impressive facts, than was afforded by the case of MR. BIDWELL. I saw him much during his latter days, and was frequently with him when on his death bed. I was by him in the last solemn scene, and oft as it

has been my lot to witness such solemnities, never have I seen mind more powerfully assert her supremacy over matter, the soul more triumphantly demonstrate its independence on the body, than in his person. Indeed his corporeal frame seemed too feeble for the mental operations of which it was the instrument. It was worn down by their excess, and when this feebleness was increased by sickness, the mind would oft display her mastery over the material organ, by causing it to summon up its slackening energies to carry on, for a season, some process either in conversation or attention to reading and prayer, which it could not constantly or long sustain.

I cannot trust myself to speak much of his mental character. I knew him too short and too late in life to be competent to describe it: besides, a mind of equal compass with his own would have been necessary adequately to appreciate that character, and equal powers of description with his are requisite for its delineation. But from this duty I am happily relieved by your personal knowledge of him. The great majority of those before whom I speak have had better opportunities of estimating his talents and his worth than I. He hath gone out and in among you for many years, to do so now alas! no more. You are therefore able of yourselves to supply my deficiency, and memory I am confident will supply you with many illustrations of the faint outline I shall give. A clear and distinct perception, intellect acute and profound, a strong and accurate judgment, the most comprehensive views, all combined with a lively fancy and vigorous imagination, and highly cultivated by education and habits of reflection, seemed his chief characteristics. These, united happily in him with regular constant application, gave him great advantage. But in his equanimity and self-possession, in his government of temper and spirit of forbearance, he possessed still higher gifts. It is here, at this point I may say of the character, that the moral virtues so beautifully blend with the christian graces, and are lost in their still lovelier hues. Charity dwelt in his heart; the law of kindness was upon his lips ever. The many acts of beneficence which he performed, were not more from feeling than from duty. The smallest part of them can be known, for they were done in imitation of him whose life was one continued scene of beneficence, but who taught his followers to do good for its own sake, and not to be seen of men. But we came not hither to pronounce his eulogy. These characteristics are best known in his immediate circle, and there let the memory of them flourish, till its members shall join

him where the mind shall receive, if not new faculties, at least such expansion and increase to the old, as will leave us nothing to regret or to desire. There envy will not darken the countenance or corrode the heart of any; neither will malice and calumny detract from our worth, and mar our enjoyment.

Of his public life I will not speak. It is easy to imagine that a man of his character and situation could not but exercise much influence on the affairs of whatever community he might fall amongst. His conduct I believe has operated as largely as that of any person probably in this Province on the state of its affairs. And whatever may be said of his mode of accomplishing his intentions, none will say that these were not of the most liberal description, and designed for the general good. Of his liberality in religious matters, and his efforts to maintain those privileges which are so dear to us, there are present many witnesses, whose attendance I would thus acknowledge as no less honorable to his memory than to themselves.* But the affairs in which he was concerned are too recent; I am too little acquainted with the state of public matters and of political parties; party feeling runs yet too high; and as might be expected in a country so new, with a population so diversified, there are too many clashing interests, too many ways of viewing the conduct of public men, to do justice to their character, or to obtain for their apologists an impartial hearing. But I am not his apologist; I have nothing to defend. If I knew his public faults, I would take the surest and the safest way to protect the sacredness of his memory, by confessing them. Different opinions will doubtless be entertained on this point; some I know will say that as a christian it would have been better had he meddled less with politics. I touch not this topic to introduce them, they are out of place, equally, on this occasion, with my own character and the nature of a worshipping assembly. He has gone however where the politics of this world and all the acerbations of party feeling affect him not. Perhaps he

* Many persons of different opinions both in politics and religion from Mr. Bidwell, as well as his more immediate friends and connexions, attended on his funeral and on this occasion. The Episcopal Methodists, with a disinterestedness which does them the highest credit, shut their own place of worship, and came as a body to evince their regard for the deceased, and their sense of public loss. The author, however much he regrets the cause of this display of liberality, cannot help expressing his fervent desire that such displays may become frequent and on less mournful occasions. How many reasons have professed Christians for union? There is not one solid reason for division.

may have already viewed many transactions in a different light, and weighed his own and others conduct and motives in a different balance from what he formerly did. I would leave him there, and only remind my hearers, that we too have to go to the same tribunal; our conduct and motives will have to pass a similar review. Let this allay the harsh spirit of criticism, and solemnize our minds in prospect of our own final account. But this much I will say, that if any one supposes the Christian must surrender his own inherent rights, or allow those of his fellow creatures to be infringed, without lifting up his voice against oppression, without using all just and legal means to prevent such abuse, my views and feelings have no affinity with his. He who supposeth this, hath studied ill the character of the gospel or the conduct of its most devoted servant; when his rights were infringed, no one knew better than Paul how to defend them with becoming spirit. Let his conduct before the chief captain and the magistrates of Philippi attest: "Is it lawful for you," said he, "to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" "They have beaten us openly uncondemned being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily! nay, verily, let them come themselves and fetch us." "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat where I ought to be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong as thou very well knowest. I appeal unto Caesar." Yet who took more joyfully the spoiling of his goods, or more readily suffered personal wrong, than did this same apostle? But in this he only imitated his Divine Master, who, though he gave his back to the smiter and his cheek to them who plucked off the hair, yea, voluntarily submitted to death; yet asserted his rights and displayed in the same moment his power, when by a simple word he made his captors go backward and fall to the ground, and declared before Pilate that he had a sovereign kingdom and power, to which even that proud governor would have to answer. Let us then learn to maintain our rights by fair and honorable means, and when deprived of them let us know how to suffer. It is matter of deep regret that the affairs of any community, especially in a free country, and above all where the gospel is known and professed, cannot be discussed without the heat of passion and the bitterness of personal invective. But should any stoop to means so low, to methods so dishonorable and so unjust, as to injure private character and wantonly to wound individual feelings, with a view to gain their own or their party's ends, under pretence, the while, of zeal for public good, let none of us present permit our soul to come

into their secret, or our honor with their assembly to be united! Let us remember this mortal will put on immortality, and then all such acts will increase in magnitude of guilt in proportion to the height of our privileges and the extent of our duration.

But it was as a professing christian that I knew him, and it is in this light that it is most important for us to consider him. He had been from his youth favored with the advantages of religion, and ever seemed disposed to acknowledge its importance. But it was not till the year 1825, in the 61st or 62d year of his age, that he made an open profession by becoming united with this Church, of which he became afterwards an office bearer. Of his conduct and feeling during the first part of that period, you who were his fellow members and office bearers can best judge. But I can speak of his constant attendance, christian forbearance and tender feeling, and of the deep interest which he has felt in the success of the gospel here, and the prosperity of this church ever since I came among you. We shall all feel his loss; and when I look to his place and remember how constantly it was filled, and now think that he shall fill it never again—that we shall hear his silver voice—behold his intelligent look no more, to take part in our praises and our prayers—I too am ready to repine at his removal, and to exclaim—we are bereaved!

His last illness was neither protracted nor very severe. He had nearly attained the limit of human life, and we need not wonder if a frame which had so long contained an over-active mind, should have been visited with trouble and sorrow. But his mind retained its wonted vigor; it seemed as clear and strong as ever; both memory and judgment continued to his very close. This was evinced in many ways, but especially by his sense of the benefit of christian intercourse and his grateful acknowledgement of the kind offices which his situation required. He knew well how readily they were performed, yet he could not help expressing his regret at the trouble which they caused; and to one friend at parting he said, I thank you for all your christian kindness. Nor did he neglect to warn others and entreat them to secure by a full and speedy surrender of themselves to God through the mediation of Jesus, the better blessings of eternity, and thus to be prepared for the ills of life and the approach of death.

He labored under considerable doubt and depression during his illness. This arose neither from disbelief of Divine truth nor from mere fear of death. It was from a view of the exceeding sinfulness

of sin. He felt and confessed himself to be a sinner, helpless in himself and undone, except through the intercession of Jesus Christ. He believed firmly in the reality of the Saviour's atonement, and the prevalence of his intercession, but felt not that confidence in his own simple reliance upon it which many attain. He felt the truth but not the comforts of the gospel; in this he shared with many most eminent saints whose last days were passed under a cloud: such in late times were the excellent Mr. Scott the Commentator, and the amiable Leigh Richmond, whose works have been so justly celebrated. They were persons whose judgments had been much exercised, and who, accustomed to detect self-deceit in others, justly dreaded it in themselves. Indeed, he acknowledged when making a profession of his faith in Jesus, that he could not speak with the same confidence of himself that he heard many do, and this feeling of uncertainty deepened painfully as he felt certain that life was drawing to a close; and he longed and prayed with great earnest for a sense of entire security. His frequent expression was, "O for an assurance of interest in Christ!" But prayer was offered up for him, and it was heard, for on the forenoon of the evening in which he died the cloud was removed; he was enabled to look away from himself as a guilty creature, and to look to Jesus as the author and finisher of his faith. Then, so far from fearing death, he longed for its approach; and when specially asked if he felt that it would be a relief, he plainly intimated his confidence that it would, and prayed "Even so come Lord Jesus come quickly." He was sensible of his rapid decline; knew what progress the fell destroyer was making, and could depict with graphical exactness his peculiar state. When asked if he felt much pain, he answered that he could bear specific pain much better, but that now he seemed melted into one common mass. He was sensible of the loss of discrimination by his palate, and found his extremities gradually become cold. Finally, about a quarter past nine o'clock on Saturday evening, in the midst of his relatives and christian friends, in perfect composure, so stillly that it was uncertain at what precise moment, though the Doctor was watching his ceasing pulse, he fell asleep. His latter end was peace.

"So grant me God, from earthly care,
From pride and passion free,
Aloft through faith and love's pure air
To hold my course to thee.

No lure to tempt, no art to stay
My soul as home she springs,
Thy sunshine on her joyous way,
Thy freedom on her wings."

And now, in closing this discourse, and applying it to those before me, I trust the circumstances in which we are placed will justify the public manner in which I first of all address you, the immediate and beloved relatives of the deceased. You have lost indeed the kind parent, the judicious, affectionate guide of your youth, and the invaluable friend of your riper years. In him how many most interesting offices were united? He was at once the father and instructor; the social companion and christian brother. How many tender sentiments doth the recollection of him awaken in your bosoms to embalm his memory and enhance your loss! But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, you need not "sorrow as those who have no hope." It often happens that the very circumstances which require of us the strongest sympathy and means of consolation, deprive us at the same time of the capacity of employing those means of evincing our compassionate regard. What human voice could comfort you? What earthly prospect compensate your loss? But you have a strong consolation in the assurance of his immortality of glory and honor before the face of his Saviour Jesus Christ, and in your expectation of meeting him there. It was his firm persuasion, expressed at his last hour most distinctly, and as of long standing, that christian friends and associates will recognize each other in the mansions of rest and joy whither he hath gone. This expectation is fully confirmed by those views to which in the foregoing remarks we have been led. It is rather my duty and that of your friends and this assembly, to congratulate you, and join in thanksgiving to "the Giver of every good gift and every perfect gift," that you share in this hope; that you all are partakers and professors of the same precious faith which consoled and supported him, and that from sickness and absence you were all brought to witness its effects at his departure. Oh! sully not then so bright a prospect by unavailing grief and tears. Let your joy be complete in Jesus, and live so as to secure the fulfilment of that pleasing anticipation, that when Jesus cometh, you and he who "is not lost but gone before," may be "caught up together, and be for ever with the Lord."

Let us also his brethren in office and the members of this church, endeavor by increased fidelity, affection and activity, to supply the lack of service occasioned by his removal from amongst us, and by faithful fervent prayer to the Head and ruler of the Church, to obtain others, many and equal, who may more than fill up his vacant place.

Let me urge on those to whom he spake in kindness and faithful-

ness, and of whom some I know are now hearing me, not to forget his solicitations to prepare for a dying hour. Oh! let them remember the scene which in him they so lately witnessed. How unavailing are the highest talents and attainments—how equally worthless the praise or reproach of their fellow men! How insufficient wealth and grandeur and all the pomp and circumstance of this vain world to sustain the soul in its parting hour! Let them and all here present—let the careless, the unbeliever and impenitent, remember what he longed for, “an assurance of an interest in Christ,” without which all other gain will be but loss: and Oh! may we all be enabled when called like him to die, to expect the period when this mortal shall put on immortality, and to say, Amen: Even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

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